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The Song of Mysticism.



The
Song of Mysticism

**Being an Attempt to Solve the Problem:
"Which is most Reliable,
Facts or Interpretation,
Science or Mysticism?"**

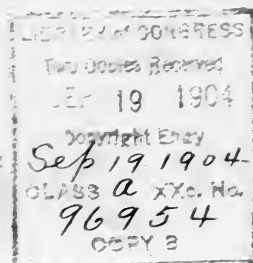
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
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Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie

11 June 1933.

* * THE * SONG * OF * MYSTICISM * *



* INTRODUCTION *

Let Origen and Swedenborg both read
Into the Scriptures splendid Mystery;
And yet all progress fruited from the seed
Of Huxley's doubt, and Darwin's scrutiny.

Yet Facts and Science and Machinery
Have failed Man's noblest problems to adjust;
Life's Riddle still unlocks to but one key:
Mysterious Faith that God somehow is just.

Which is the Truth—the Symbol, or the Fact?
This the eternal Riddle of the Sphinx.
Now, Faith seems true—now, we are forced to act:
Where is the Bridge that spans and interlinks?

This Secret must we yet from Heaven wrest,
Or overhear it, listening in prayer;
We shall find strength to prosper in its quest,
Or we will earn it with defiant care.

* * * * *



Both Mysticism and Agnosti-
cism present conflicting claims;
which of them deserves recog-
nition as Standard of Life? *

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



✧ THE MYSTIC MOOD ✧

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT?

This is no recent, chance logomachy;
It asks how Mind habitually doth act,
What are its limits, and its history.

Symbolic habits come from Mystic Mood
That animated e'en the Troglodites,
Who looked on Nature, in their search for food,
As filled with helpful, or opposing sprites.

Or when some loved protecting parent died,
How easy to suppose him still around,
Still fighting by his warring Offspring's side,
Still haunting forest, mountain, river, sound.

How easy this, when in some vivid Dream
He yet returns to warn, inspire, command;
They sing his songs, of theirs is he the theme,
He is the Tutelary of the Band.



Mysticism is not a mere Opinion, but is the outcome of a 'faculty' of Human Nature, seen in Comparative Religion.

✻ ✻ THE MYSTIC MOOD ✻ ✻ SECOND ✻ ✻

Some animal his salient traits displays—

‘Tis he incarnate, lingering still near;

Their ‘Totem’ shall in battle courage raise!

In peace a solemn worship shall receive!

Thus Gods are born for Humans that aspire

From inability to draw the line

Between th’unwelcome Fact and wild Desire,

The Need and Help, the Human and Divine.

But why did these poor Troglodites aspire?

Why do they feel they need Divinities?

Or why to them seems Planetary Fire

All palpitant with Holy Fire?

Because the Power that Makes for Righteousness

Seeks men through every Symbol possible;

There is more Truth in mystic Dreamfulness

Than vulgar scorn of th’ Imperceptible.


For Reverence was e’er Man’s noblest part;

For Self-Control was e’er Man’s purest crown;

The truer instinct e’er was of the heart;

And e’er shall be, through all the ages down.

✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻



Mysticism is not a mere Opinion, but is the outcome of a Faculty of Human Nature, seen in Comparative Religion.

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



✧ THE MYSTICISM OF WORDS ✧

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT ?

We saw above that Mysticism arose
From Human Nature, childish, inexact :
But Languages another root disclose.

O glorious Ossian, rich in Symbolism,
Macpherson wrote thee, and deceived a world;
By so much differs early archaism
From modern word in which each shade's unfurled.

So can we trace progressive History
In human thinking, that has borne at last
Familiar Dogmatic Mystery
From Poets' Hymns of Centuries long past.

So Seers sang in tongues so limited
Thoughts had to be conveyed by picture-tropes
Which meant far more, when literally read—
Thus Prophecies grew out from Jewish Hopes.

Then men made Creeds from this poetic Dream
But while new Poets rose these Creeds grew stone,
And to new races meaningless did seem
Until 'interpreted' from Mystic's throne.



Mysticism is also rooted in the
Words of Languages, whose
Vicissitudes account for Doc-
trines that need 'interpreting'.

✧ THE MYSTICISM OF WORDS ✧ SECOND ✧

For by Vicissitudes political
Its formative conditions disappeared
So that it stood there enigmatical
And by Devotion as divine revered.

Thus Jewish Hopes were read as Prophecies,
And Jewish Adjectives we print as Names,
And Eastern Poems seem Cosmologies,
And Commentaries make the wildest claims.

And who would think that mere Philology
Had sundered men in fierce religious fight?
Yet they who 'Christ', 'Messiah', 'Buddha' say
All mean 'Anointed by the Holy Light.'

But though hard Dogmas thus may be explained
This does not language-beauties depreciate;
What worthy soul from Poetry refrained,
Where Symbolism sits throned in regal State?

Or are there treasures of the Human Race
More beautiful than 'Home' or 'Holiness'?
O blind were he who found in them no trace
Of a peculiar, deeper sacredness.

Thus though Symbolic habits have misled
Those who through Texts have sought to reach to God,
Yet how short-sighted were his soul who said
That Mysticism is foolishness or fraud.

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Mysticism is also rooted in the
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✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



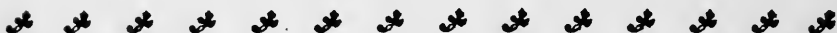
Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT?

Though Symbolism be clearly primitive,
Its fruits now let us scan with care exact
Lest we should lose what blessings it might give.

First, Jewish hearts themselves broke thro' the Word
Unchangeable, because esteemed divine,
And yet in places foolish and absurd—
E'en they into old bottles poured New Wine.

Talmudic stories for the young they told,
Targumic Commentaries for the wise,
While Q'abalism was gradually unrolled
For those who craved the Deeper Mysteries.

Then Philo, noted Alexandrian Jew,
Greek ridicule of Scripture did dispel
By showing how its Legends might be true
If philosophic doctrines made to spell.



The famous Classic Systems
of Mysticism founded on the
Bible must be searched for pos-
sible valuable spiritual Fruit.


✧ THE ✧ BIBLE ✧ MYSTERIES ✧ SECOND ✧

For Plato dreamed of an Ideal World
In whose deep Calm, abode Ideas serene,
From which the Great Artificer unfurled
Their Real Copies in this sphere terrene.

Whence Origen declared that he had found
In Bible, fourfold sense : the Literal,
Within and under it, the Moral ground ;
The Anagogical, the Spiritual.

Then Swedenborg, with new Platonic zeal,
Declared that through the Physical he saw
A Spiritual Counterpart reveal
A universal Correspondence Law.

Such are the classic Mystic Dreams :
The fruit of times when Man's ingenious Mind
Not having Facts to underpin its schemes
Was driv'n to Speculation undefin'd.

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

The famous Classic Systems
of Mysticism founded on the
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sible valuable spiritual Fruit.

✽ ✽ THE ✽ SONG ✽ OF ✽ MYSTICISM ✽ ✽



✽ THE GENTILE ORACLES ✽

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT ?
For the Symbolic Habit of the Mind
Has burrowed not alone in Jewish tract,
But in the Oracles of all Mankind.

So Gladstone did most keenly demonstrate
How Homer's Iliad was not history
So much as tale of how the Sun set late,
And rose again in Eastern majesty.

He proved the Heroes' famous names were all
Derived from Hindu names of Morn and Night;
The Stratagem by which Troy's walls did fall
But reproduced from Ramayana fight.

The Ramayana, Mahabharata,
The silent Pyramid—each in their turn
Have all been shown Symbolic Media :
No fact too sure for such a fire to burn.



The Pagan Scriptures also
have been 'interpreted' spirit-
ually in different manners to
indicate Mystic Truths. ✽ ✽

✱ ✱ THE ✱ SONG ✱ OF ✱ MYSTICISM ✱ ✱



✱ THE POPULAR ORACLES ✱

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT ?

The Symbol not alone in books doth reign :

In practical affairs it doth exact

An hourly tribute, powerful and plain.

In vain has Reason, yea, and Piety

Attested Providence admits no Luck;

The Horse-shoe reigns in world-wide majesty,

And Friday counts for more than sense and pluck.

Proverbial wisdom meets us everywhere :

It is quite true that somehow Boasts defeat ;

The Unexpected happens when the sky is fair;

The Wise will look for pitfalls to his feet.

No doubt but there is Magic in the stars !

The ass has warned the Prophet many times !

Not once nor twice have spirits sprung from jars,

Nor aptest Warnings nudged from silly rhymes.

The Symbol still is with us everywhere,

In hall and cottage, kitchen, library,

Deny it as we will, with jibe or prayer,

It holds us still, still haunts Humanity.



Whatever our Views be about
Symbols, ✱ the Fact remains
that even Today Superstition
rules in every Land on Earth.

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



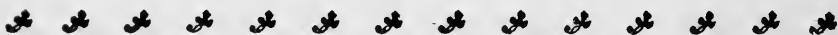
✧ THE DIVINE ORACLES ✧

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT?
Till now, what Men have said have we enquired;
But now we shall compel the Truth exact
By asking God which one 't was He inspired.

And to receive an answer unequivocal
We will betake us to our Inner Shrine,
And listening in silence mystical
Full thrice we hear the Symbol is Divine.

The Symbol is Divine: Because by such
Is it that Unseen Helpers Humans guide
In Dream and Vision, Warning Voice, and Touch
To warn them of the Presence by their side.

The Symbol is Divine: When men enquire
For Guidance by Consulting Bible Text,
Who dares deny the frequent Flash of Fire,
The Opportune Response to problem vexed?




✧ The Experiences by which
Spiritual Progress is made consist
of Symbols, showing that
they have Divine Approval.

✧ THE ✧ DIVINE ✧ ORACLES ✧ SECOND ✧

The Symbol is Divine : Who scans Events
As symbols of a guiding Hand Divine
Gets revelations, or what represents
Divine Assistances, or Thought Benign.

For these three reasons may we not conclude
That God approves of a Symbolic Mind?
At least, he grows who takes such attitude,
And gathers Fruit unknown to most mankind.

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧
✧ The Experiences by which
Spiritual Progress is made consist of Symbols, showing that
they have Divine Approval.

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



✧ HUMAN REASON ✧

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT ?
What hesitation more, if we have found
That God approves, not Scepticism exact,
But Symbolism, by blessings richly crowned ?

Alas ! Man has a Conscience and a Mind ;
And though he lose all spiritual Fruit,
And though he may be free from care while blind
The Honest Student stands irresolute.

And God, the God of Truth must surely be ;
He must reward Experimental Search !
Besides, we can show Blunders in the plea
Of Mystics, and can contradict the Church.

Yet if we hope for satisfaction whole,
We must consider what the Truth exacts ;
O cruel Question for the troubled Soul !
Which is the Truth, the Symbol or the Facts ?



Although Experience demon-
strates that Symbolism is a key
which unlocks Heaven, its pa-
tent Blunders offend Reason.

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



✧ THE MYSTIC MISTAKES ✧

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT?
Though God approves of Symbols, as we saw,
We yet are sure that they are not exact;
At least the classic forms show serious flaw.

For instance, Origen presumes to say
The Spiritual sense is always true
E'en when the Literal was purposely
Writ false to show the Spiritual through.

But surely this must be impossible
If God be Truth; could He not find a way
To shadow forth the Indiscernible
Without inspiring words that Truth betray?

Then Swedenborg insists each Bible word
God spoke for the Interior sense of it,
Which from the Meaning of it is inferred
Or just as often from its Opposite.

O fatal theory, which states not when
A word 's intended for its opposite!
'Tis evident that anything can then
Be made to mean whate'er a man sees fit.



The Classic Mystic Systems
in order to find what they
wish do not hesitate to falsify
the words they 'interpret'. ✧

✱ ✱ THE MYSTIC MISTAKES ✱ SECOND ✱ ✱

Just such a juggling with the Letter's sense
 Helped Athanasius change Christianity
 Though Arius for his views had evidence
 Of all the Masters of Antiquity.

At times, from man's, God's nature he inferred—
 But this was Sacrilege, when dangerous!
 Thus Christian Creed was fixed, not by the Word
 But Constantine's endorsement ponderous.

The Song of Solomon was once believed
 To be a parable of Love Divine,
 Yet universal Common Sense perceived
 It was a love-song with but low design.

Was Sufi verse by fire divine inflamed?
 Was Love of God intended by Red Wine?
 Nay, e'en the mystic Emerson disclaimed
 Its drinking-songs could bear a sense divine.

And then Max Mueller shows Coincidence
 Is very frequent in philology
 Which can be proved to bear no higher sense
 Though beautiful, and apt to Mystery.

'Twere bad enough if Mystics only erred,
 But in religious feuds, what blood has flowed?
 What mystic dream was partly not absurd?
 All Prophets sang their own as Only Road!

For of these Mystics who have found Great Light
 Who ever saw e'en two who could agree?
 Yet each has reached the Beatific Sight,
 The One, the Only, the Eternal Sea!

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱



The Classic Mystic Systems
 in order to find what they
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✽ ✽ THE ✽ SONG ✽ OF ✽ MYSTICISM ✽ ✽



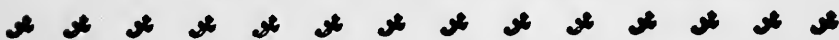
✽ THE FATAL DILEMMA ✽

The SYMBOL or the FACT—which shall we choose?
God stands for one—The other is so true?
Yet God is highest Fact—Nor would we lose
Development on spiritual plane.

Who thee condemns, himself decrees insane;
Who thee would depreciate, must use thee still!
O Sanity, thou Compass, Anchor-chain,
Thou Panoply of those who would be free!

Yet Holiness, thou Jewel of Great Price,
Thou One Thing Needful, Fragrance of the Rose,
The World's well lost, for all dost thou suffice;
Thou Gate of Heaven, Thou Divine Repose.

Whose wisdom will between you both decide?
One day I serve the one, the other next;
And thus I waver, while my life-years glide,
In tears, in prayers, all hopelessly perplexed.



Any Conscientious and yet also
Spiritual Person is sure to
come to the heart-breaking
Dilemma—Reason or Faith?✽

✧ ✧ THE ✧ SONG ✧ OF ✧ MYSTICISM ✧ ✧



✧ THE COMPROMISERS ✧

Which is the TRUTH, the SYMBOL or the FACT ?

Four would-be Comforters to us arise :

‘No need, by choosing thus thy heart distract—
He will take both, who would be truly wise.’

Alas! The first one of these Comforters

Is Mr. Wilful, who no farther goes

Than what he chooses, or what he prefers,
Approximating all, he nothing knows.

Alas, the second of these Comforters

Is genial Mr. Superficial,

Whose smattering of Science issues blurs,
While flattering himself he's logical.

Alas, the third one of these Comforters

Is Mr. Hazy, quite incapable

Of seeing points exactly : so he errs

With good intentions, imperturbable.



Four Compromisers, the Wilful
Superficial, Hazy and Lazy
are bold to straddle the Con-
tradiction—but who listens ?

✻ ✻ ✻ THE ✻ COMPROMISERS ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻

Alas, the last one of these Comforters
 Is Mr. Tyro, who is young, means well,
 Who all unconscious mare's nests stirs,
 Who rushes in where Angels heed them well.

Such are our Comforters ; Those who deserve
 A patient ear reecho our despair,
 Here Huxley, who from Truth would never swerve,
 There Newman, whom Devotion did ensnare.

For even Newman had himself attempted first
 The Middle Road our Comforters point out ;
 But neither Brain nor Heart thus quenched their thirst,
 While thinking clearly forced him on to doubt.

✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻



The Wilful, the the Superfi-
 cial, the Hazy and the Lazy
 are bold to straddle the Con-
 tradiction—but who listens ?

✽ ✽ THE ✽ SONG ✽ OF ✽ MYSTICISM ✽ ✽



✽ THE DIVINE DECISION ✽

Which is the TRUTH—the SYMBOL or the FACT ?
And now that we have had our human say,
And though we will not one small word retract,
Yet for Divine Decision shall we pray.

“ O Human Soul, All thou hast said is true :
Alone the Search for Facts has led men right ;
My Mystics were mistaken through and through,
And thou deservest Praise who saw'st this light.

“ And yet, O Soul, give up this sceptic Search,
Resign it unto those who seek not Heaven ;
Fear not for it—though stifled by the Church,
There always would remain agnostic Leaven.

“ No doubt that Science shall somehow advance
Conditions for the Welfare of the Race ;
But trust all this unto My Vigilance
Thou hast enough with problems of thy Place.’



The Conclusion is that since
Absolute Fact-Knowledge is
unattainable, it is not worth
the loss of practical Salvation.

✻ ✻ THE DIVINE DECISION ✻ SECOND ✻ ✻

“A thousand favoured lives would not suffice
The Absolutest Truth to reach or keep;
Thou hast but One short life: Take my advice:
It is too short: soon comes eternal sleep.

“The Truth will keep, e'en if by Thee not weighed;
If now not scanned, 't will be some other day.
And should it never be to human eyes displayed
It will not alter, nor will pass away.

“Leave this impossible Attempt to those
Who are content to serve the World, and die;
It is a noble pastime that they chose—
Encourage them, but Thou, work for the Sky.

“I am a God of practical design:
I work with All, whatever be their 'Views',
All Churches, all Religions, every Shrine,
Or harsh Dissent, and Scepticism too.

“Art in the Church? I there will come to thee;
Hast thou discovered how it does misguide?
'T is no misfortune thou must shake thee free:
I will provide for thy support outside.

“But thou, live holily, my earnest Child,
Who seek'st to conquer Immortality,
I will assist thee in thy efforts wild
If thou wilt mark what I in Symbols say.

✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻ ✻



The Conclusion is that since
Absolute Fact-Knowledge is
unattainable, it is not worth
the loss of practical Salvation.

✻ ✻ THE DIVINE DECISION ✻ THIRD ✻ ✻

"Nor need'st thou, Child, because thou listenest
Unto My Voice in every Breath of Wind,
Like Swedenborg or Origen invest
With Mysteries each Glance of Healthy Mind.

"By Symbol live: But Not THY Symbol Preach!
I use Thy Symbol when I speak to thee
Though it be false—nay, Must be, since thy reach
Of sight is far too short all Truth to see.

"By Symbol Live: but Think thou by the Fact!
At best thy Thought will go but little ways,
While thou may'st Step with fruitfulness exact
Without a moment's Study or Delay.

"By Symbol Live: and teach to Others too
To live by THEIR OWN Symbols' sacred light—
But be thou sure Thyself dost thro' and thro'
Take full advantage of Thy Symbol's might.

I am a God of Practical Design!
Thus Use I Symbols, though all Facts I Be:
For Moral Needs All Methods I COMBINE
If I but Land thee safe up here with me!"



The Conclusion is that since
Absolute Fact-Knowledge is
unattainable, it is not worth
the loss of practical Salvation.

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